

The Socio-Cultural and Structural Constraints facing  
Women Group Management in Lurambi Division of  
Kakamega District: The Case of Mwirake and Sikuvale  
Women Groups.

By

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PREFACE

This dissertation is based on a study carried out in order to fulfill my academic requirements for the one year postgraduate diploma course in cultural studies, offered by the Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi during the 1986/87 academic year.

It is a study undertaken with a hope that the findings and conclusions will in some way be of benefit to those who are interested in gender issues here in Kenya. The subject "Women In Development" is relatively new in the academic field although interest in this area of study dates back for a long time and the seriousness by which it has been taken of late goes along way to show that much can be achieved.

My interest in issues concerning women dates back to the mid -1960's during my stay in the United States of America where the feminist movement reached its peak in the seventies. Although both the United States of America and my own society (Kenya) offer contrasting atmosphere in as far as gender issues are concerned, due to the fact that human rights are interpreted differently in both societies, the process of integrating women in development and the underlying issues are basically the same. The process by which any government seeks to advance the

(ii)

growth and distribution of available resources must take into account its women otherwise the development process is hampered.

My involvement in the feminist movement has been non-academic but more or less on the social level until this academic year when I had a chance to be exposed to substantive and theoretical issues in gender studies. The views expressed in this dissertation are not necessarily those of the Institute of African Studies, but my own.

As such, I wish to extend my sincere thanks to Mr. F.E. Masakhalia, the former Permanent Secretary in the then Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, of the Kenya government, for having made it possible for me to be introduced to the field of Development (Applied) Anthropology. This was the stepping stone to my involvement and hence great interest in the field of Cultural Studies.

I also wish to thank the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries (SAREC) for their grant which enabled me to undertake the course. Above all, I wish to wholeheartedly thank the Director of the Institute of African Studies, Prof. Gideon S. Were for facilitating the SAREC grant at the Institute without which this study could not have been possible.

I wish also to thank my lecturers Dr. J. Akong'a, Dr. Osaga Odak, Sultan Somje, Dr. J. Olenja and above all my most thanks go to Dr. Collette Suda for supervising this dissertation.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

What are the socio-cultural and structural constraints that women encounter in forming and running their group activities? Is it through group activities, most of them self-help, that women in our predominantly marginal peasant economies, can at long last, overcome centuries long traditional barriers and gain social and economic independence for the betterment of their welfare, or are their efforts unrewarded leaving them worse off than before? In other words are the same motivating factors which have led women to organize group activities, still remain a barrier to their efforts to forge ahead? If women are to operate within the same social system that created the unfavourable conditions, then this same social system will tend to perpetuate what it created, which are, the unfavourable conditions. As a vicious circle is formed women are left the victims with no solution towards social and economic change.

Therefore the main aim and objective of this study is:-

1. To identify the socio-cultural constraints which create problems of management in women group activities. There are usually also structural constraints which these groups encounter which can lead to certain problems in effective management, therefore this study will also try to identify them.

2. To try and offer suggestions on how these constraints can be tackled and overcome so that there can be effective management in these groups.

Due to cultural definitions of gender roles in our society, women have been historically disadvantaged in all spheres of life. Gender roles have been culturally defined leading to the division of labour based on sex and age. As such cultural definition confined women to household duties both in production and reproduction. When the colonial administration introduced formal schooling it intensified gender role differentiation further by denying girls the same opportunities as boys at school attendance. There were more schools for boys than for girls. Parents found it more appropriate to send their sons to school than their daughters, and the colonial government did little if anything to correct this anomaly. As a result 90% of the women over 40 years of age in Kenya had never been to school in 1969 (ILO, 1972:296)<sup>1</sup>. 75% of these women aged between 25 and 40 had never been to school, while those in the 10-24 years age bracket less than 50% had had any schooling. Less than 25% had gone up to standard 4 level (ILO, 1972:296)<sup>2</sup>. Therefore there had developed a situation whereby women could not fully participate in the modern economy as they had no formal training. To serve as a

remedial measure, women have resorted to organising themselves into groups and start operating activities that can generate incomes for their own use, since they cannot seek wage employment due to lack of skills. It was seen as an advantage to organize and form themselves in income generating groups which they can use to improve their position in the society, without having to introduce radical social and cultural changes. It is assumed that with an income the position of women will improve. AS a result there are over ten thousand women groups (Thairu, 1984:29)<sup>3</sup>, in Kenya, most of them located in the rural areas, although quite a number of them especially those that are located in the urban areas are affiliated to the National Council of Women of Kenya which is the umbrella organization for women groups in Kenya, and has its headquarters in Nairobi. Other major women organizations that are national but with headquarters in Nairobi include Maendeleo Ya Wanawake and Mother's Union.

While organizing a group, the women elect an activity which they feel will assist them to achieve their set goal. Most of them engage in farming, business, poultry keeping, handicrafts, pig and goats projects, mutual aid or welfare and rotating saving schemes. Usually, shortly after the formation of the groups, Socio-cultural and structural constraints (that have always disadvantaged women) emerge

and affect their operations and activities. Some of these constraints persist making the management of these groups difficult.

Since these groups try to help women to accept their responsibilities and to reach their full potential as citizens, contributing to the rapid development of our nation , it is of great importance that they succeed in achieving their intended goals. This can only be realised as a result of proper management which can only be a reality as a result of identifying the constraints that can hinder progress. By identifying these constraints, this study can help the concerned groups to seek solutions and improve their positions since in this country as elsewhere in the world women are becoming increasingly aware of their rights and obligations, and as such are able to use resources that are available to them more adequately, effectively and efficiently.

The study will attempt to examine how and why socio-cultural constraints coupled with structural constraints perpetually hinder efforts aimed at the emancipation of women from poverty and economic dependence on men. Under proper management, free from socio-cultural and structural sonstraints, women groups can increase their effectiveness by making themselves economically self-reliant, be



more initiative and have the capacity to invest. They should have a sense of independence and satisfaction of being able to contribute to the betterment of their welfare. This study seeks to explore how and why socio-cultural and structural constraints make it difficult for women to manage their group activities, making them remain dependent despite vigorous effort towards emancipation. But empirical data revealed that structural constraints affecting the management of these groups far outweigh socio-cultural. In more cases than so, groups are faced with more bureaucratic red tape than with social or cultural barriers. Depending on the activity selected for participation, groups may face certain difficulties in performance or may face no socio-cultural barriers at all. It is the type of activity selected that is determining whether a group will face socio-cultural barriers but as for structural constraints, they are encountered regardless of the type of activity being undertaken by the group. Since women know what society expects or does not expect of them, they are on guard against socio-cultural constraints, but in most cases they are totally unaware of what the government administration expects of them. Conducting an empirical study was not without problems and the major difficulty faced was the lack of awareness of issues at hand on the part of my key informants many of whom have had no formal

education at all. It is this difficulty that led me to use the indirect approach or informal interview in collecting data instead of the direct one or formal interview whereby it would have been necessary to observe these groups performing their actual activities. But before an outline on the methods used is given, it is appropriate to give a definition of terms used in the study.

### The Study Site

According to the 1979 population census, Kakamega District has a total of 1,030,887 inhabitants. Of these 489, 938 are male and 540,949 female. These are currently twelve administrative divisions in the district of which Lurambi is one. Lurambi division is made up of the following locations according to the 1979 census information:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
North and South Butsotso	21,262	23,109
Bunyala	15,195	16,354
Kakamega Municipality	16,123	15,902

The sub-locations in each location are as follows:

<u>Location</u>	<u>Sub-location</u>
Butsotso North	Indangalasia, Ingotse and Eshiumeyia
Butsotso South	Esibeye, Shikoti and Bukura

Bunyala - Namirama, Sivilie, Butonga, Sidikho,  
Sirigoï and Nambacha.  
Municipality - Township, Shirere and Shichirai.

Most of this area is a farming community with major cash crops being sugarcane although there has been a recent introduction of coffee and tea. Major food crops grown are maize, millet and a host of horticultural crops.

Mwirake women groups is situated in Nambacha sub-location while Sikuvale is situated in the newly created Sivilie sub-location which until late last year used to be part of Namirama sub-location. These two groups operate in Bunyala which is not only a location but a sub-ethnic group of the entire Luhya community and it is assumed to be the smallest of the sub-ethnic groups comprising Luhya community. It is composed of about 15 major clans plus several smaller ones comprising a population of 31,549 people according to 1979 population census. Although the figures show an increase in female population as opposed to male population, there has not been a large migration of men away from home in search of wage employment. This is why women maintained that, they sometimes not receive assistance from their husbands for various reasons, one which was lack of paid employment. But a major reason which is characteristic of Banyala men is lack of motivation to do anything to earn

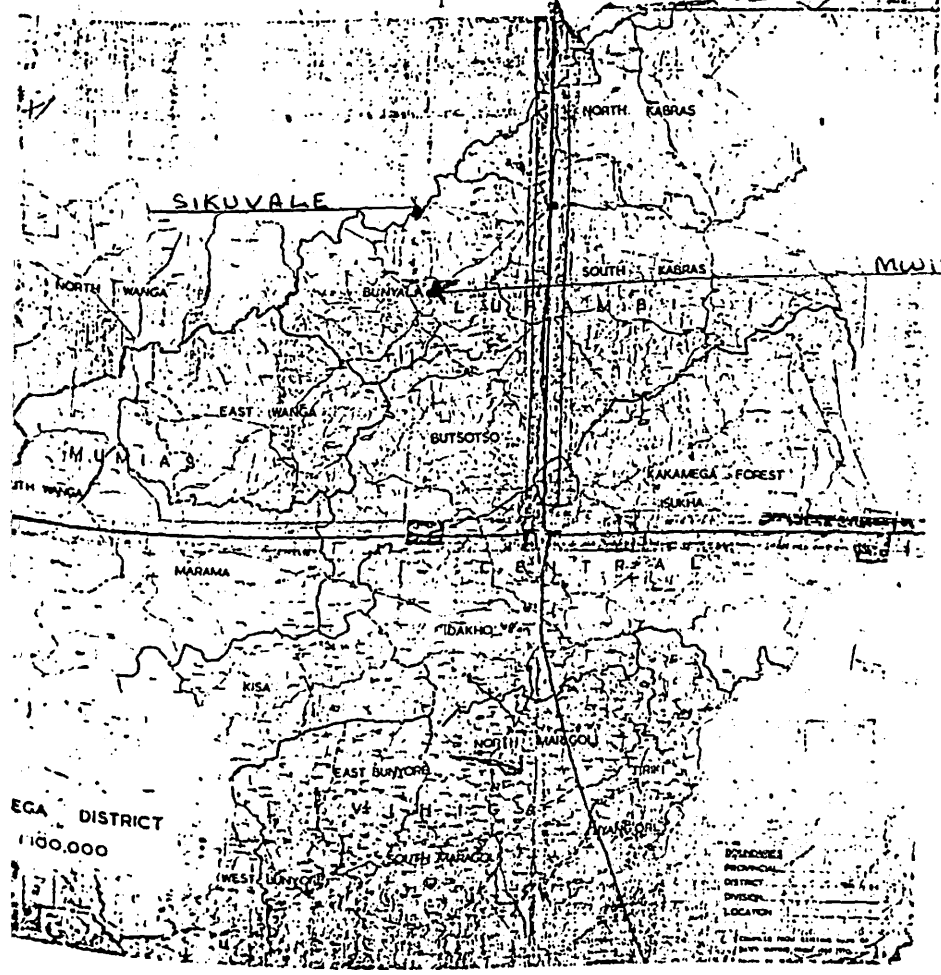
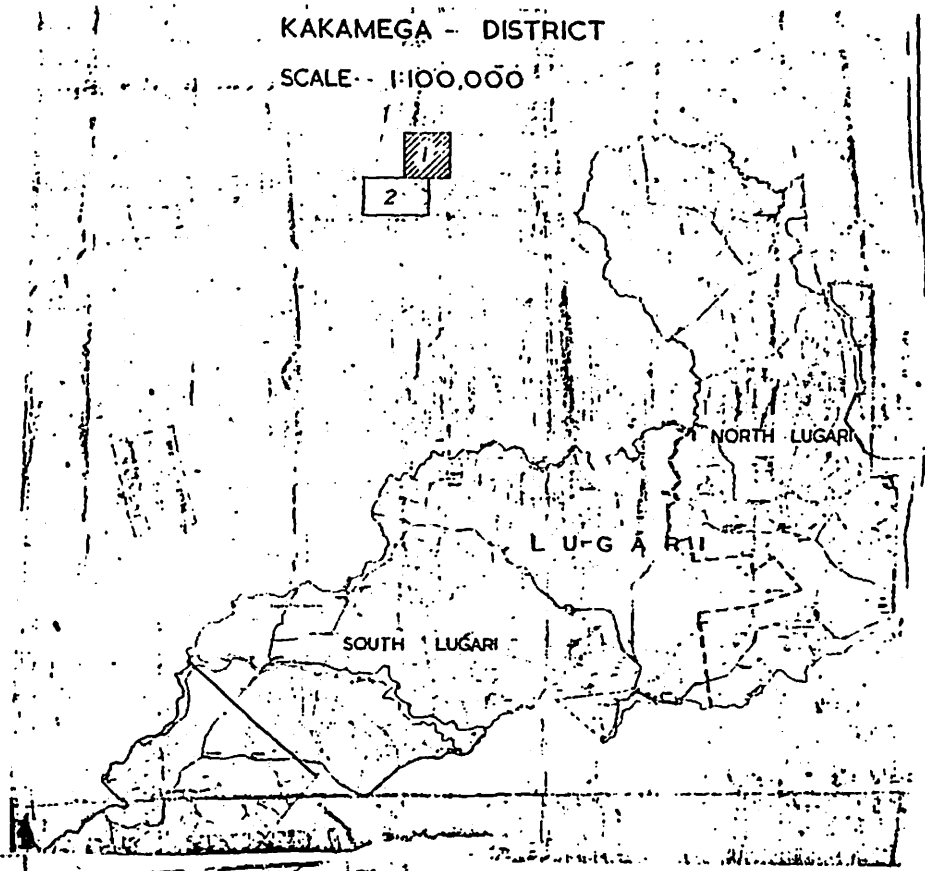
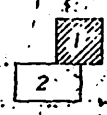
a living. Most just sit around or go for stralls on the local market to return home at the end of the day and expect to be fed by their wives. Since this sustenance by the wives is not in most cases given out of responsibility but rather because of force, the men therefore become dependent on their wives through force. The women have no option but to work hard and ensure that the family is receiving subsistence. This is the atmosphere that both Mwirake and Sikuvale women groups operate in. They operate in an atmosphere where it is assumed that it is the responsibility of men to support their families. The society acts as if only men support their families, and yet both men and women do so, or rather women do so alone. Whatever the woman does is considered "supplemental" to that of men and yet the supplementing bit turns out to be total support. So these groups operate in a society which poses obstacles which are conceptual and attitudinal. Resistance to women's participation in certain activities considered not traditional may be greatly felt among groups most exposed to rapid social change. Politicians exploit these groups for their own ends, intellectuals and development planners also do the same when they use them more for extension services.

The reason why Lurambi division was selected is that it gives an average representation of rural women groups and of the socio-cultural attitudes prevalent in our society. In other words, there is nothing extreme about it. It has middle representation. What is lacking there is likely to lack elsewhere and what is found there is likely to be found elsewhere too. What is happening in groups in Lurambi division is likely to be happening in many groups elsewhere.

Locations of Mwirake and Sikuvale Women Groups.

KAKAMEGA - DISTRICT

SCALE - 1:100,000



PROVINCE  
DISTRICT  
DIVISION  
LOCATION

## Definition of Terms

### Women groups: Organisational structure

Women groups are organizations where women voluntarily get together for the promotion of their common interests. They are usually self-help and are registered by the Ministry of Culture and Social Services by paying a fee of Ksh. 100.00 (Women's Bureau, 1986:4)<sup>4</sup>. Usually a group is started by the identification of a need of which the concerned women wish to deal with. This may be financial, pschycological or social such as a water project. Some are rotating saving schemes or what is popularly refered to as merry-go-round contributions of usually cash money. The purpose of all this is to fill a gap in society brought about as a result of women being left out of the mainstream of things. Because they are self-help groups registered under the Ministry of Culture and Social Services, they can gather and hold meetings without a permit.

After formation, the groups form a management committee which usually comprises of a chairlady, a secretary (who should be able to read and write), and a treasurer. After the presentation of their registration papers to the right authorities, they are usually encouraged by the Women's Bureau to have a bank account, to facilitate proper management of their funds.

One major problem facing women groups is that they have no legal protection or are not recognized under any of the existing Acts of The Laws of Kenya. For example they are not registered under the Companies Act, Partnership Act, Cooperatives Act and the Societies Act, therefore a problem may arise as to who owns their assets. The Ministry of Culture and Social Services can only register these groups in order for them to be able to get grants, but the Ministry has no powers to represent the groups in court of law. The women's group is not a legal entity therefore it cannot be sued; only individuals within the group can be able to do this. For example, if a group defaults on a loan repayment the group representatives (who are usually the chairlady, the secretary and the treasurer) will be followed individually; and liability is unlimited. In the event of a legal problem, most women groups will turn to the Women's Bureau for assistance and since the Bureau is not in position to deal with legal matters, they are usually referred to the Law Society of Kenya where they may not necessary be assisted. Therefore a need arises to have further legislation to protect women groups. There is need to either amend the existing Acts in order to cater for women groups (whose exclusion starts from the law excluding women because they do not own land whose registration is usually under male ownership) or to have a simple Act enacted as the existing



legislation is too complex for most women to understand.

### Heads of Households

For the purpose of this study by head of household we do not necessarily refer to husbands alone but also to other male members of the family who may have decision making powers, such as grown up sons or brothers. These may be looked upon to provide leadership and guidance even if the father is present but for one reason or another (old age) he has relinquished this decision making powers to another male member.

### Constraints:

#### Socio-Cultural

These are constraints which arise out of the way in which society expects women to behave and operate. Due to this expectation women are socialized in a particular way which in most cases does not permit them to form or organize and operate as a group. They are not expected to be experts in management and as such these constraints impede the maximization of their productivity and performance in group activities.

### Structural

Structural constraints are those that are brought about by the system, such as the availability or lack of extension services, legal <sup>limitations</sup> / and misappropriation of funds. These constraints can affect the dynamics of the group, for example, a case where a group wishes to open a bank account and sends two of its members with the funds to do that, without prior knowledge that is a requirement to have all the committee members physically present. Because the chairlady is not there, the others are turned back without proper explanation. In future, they lack time, funds for transport to and from the bank, and the needed motivation to make another trip and as a result the group stays without a bank account and not eligible for grants from the Department of Social Services, Ministry of Culture and Social Services.

To facilitate easy identification of the socio-cultural and structural constraints which affect women groups, those in Lurambi division of Kakamega district were selected. Specifically, two women groups namely Mwirake and Sikuvale were selected.

Mwirake Women Group: Origin, Membership and activities:

This was chosen because it was thought that it consisted of members of a particular ethnic group (the <sup>Abalandaa</sup> Kikuyu women) who had migrated into the division from outside. It was thought that it had 25 members. Because of the fact that these members had come into the community it would have been interesting to compare their activities with those of groups composed of members originally from the area. But it turned out that Mwirake Women group is composed of 41 members who are mainly from the Abalandaa clan of Bunyala Location in Lurambi division. All the same this did not alter plans to study the group because its activities seemed more dynamic and successful hence the decision to go ahead and study it. Its formation is a case in point to illustrate the fact that many women groups are organized along ethnic or clan lines because it is easy to do so. Usually members reside in one locality and as such provide easy access to each other. They find their problems easy to identify and to deal with because they are usually close relatives and with common interests.

This group was started by three women belonging to the Abalandaa clan by virtue of being married to Abalandaa men in the spirit of what is locally referred to as "avewulane." Translated this may simply mean "family." Their main objective was to help one another by way of contributing

shs. 2/- every fortnight so that every member at a time could be able to buy household utensils. As time went by they decided to go in for more money-making ventures to achieve bigger goals like paying school fees. Later on they were slowly joined by other Abalandaa women who felt that they could benefit by joining as members. Most of them had one problem in common. The problem was not that their husbands had migrated elsewhere in search of wage employment but were very much at home. Although they were present, they did not make an economic contribution to the family welfare, but had instead become dependent through force. During the day men simply lay around or went to Navakholo Chief's Centre for a walk expecting their wives to provide all the labour and subsistence. Therefore women saw a need for engaging in an activity that could generate an income on a collective basis as opposed to an individual undertaking. They started the group in early 1980 and registered it with the Ministry of Culture and Social Services in August of the same year. It is located at Navakholo village close to Navakholo primary school, Nambacha sub-location, of Bunyala Location in Lurambi division. Its registered officials include a chairlady, secretary and treasurer. It has 41 members all of whom are women and it has a bank account. As of the time of this study the group had some modest cash balance on their bank account. This group which is very dynamic and well organized had its

committee members popularly elected of whom the treasurer is a primary school teacher. They started by meeting twice a month but now they meet twice a week. They are registered as a group which keep poultry and does farming and business.

Sikuvale Women Group: Origin, Membership and activities:

This group is located in the most remote part of the division, on River Nzoia, just bordering Bungoma district. Unlike <sup>Mwirake</sup> women group, its membership is not drawn from a single clan but from several clans, the common denominator being the fact that they are residents of Sikuvale village of Sivilie sub-location, Bunyala location. Although remote and therefore women are not expected to be motivated enough to form a successful group, at a glance it seemed as if their activities have done well judging from the fact that they had received a grant of Kshs. 7,000/- (Women's Bureau 1986:5),<sup>5</sup> as of March 1987, from the Women's Bureau, Ministry of Culture and Social Services. But from information gathered, membership turned out to be 33 and not 36 as earlier anticipated and it is not as dynamic as it seems, few members having benefited from the grant. It is registered with the Ministry of Culture and Social Services as a group whose activities include farming and making of handcrfts, but in reality, they don't do such things but only perform traditional dances during public holidays so their activity is mainly entertainment. It started by some members who

were closely related to the Community Development Officer (henceforth referred to as CDA), being interested in her assistance to be allowed to entertain at Kakamega during important public holidays. The local CDA in collaboration with the administration is the one that co-ordinates social activities including entertainment groups that are to perform during public holidays and other special occasions. The group membership expanded and it was registered with the Ministry of Culture and Social Services in May 1981. From time of their formation, they have a bank account (which they refused to make known to this study) but their activities are not as dynamic to have warranted such a handsome grant from the Women's Bureau bypassing other worthy groups among the 46 women groups (Women's Bureau, 1986:7),<sup>6</sup> in the division. Of these 46 groups, 23 are in Bunyala location while the other 23 are in both South and North Butsotso locations. Lack of identification of worthy groups eligible for grants turned out to be one of the major problem facing these groups.

Like Mwirake Women group, Sikuvale has a committee composed of the chairlady, secretary and treasurer who were also elected on a popular vote. The group is located approximately 40 kilometers from the district headquarters and derives its name from Sikuvale the village in which it is located. Also like Mwirake Women group, most of its

members are illiterate having had no formal education. The average age is about 25 years, the majority of whom are between the age of 26 and 50 years. Initially it was thought that the economic characteristics of the two groups differed. It was thought that Mwirake as a group composed of a migrant residents who mainly reside at the market centre engaged in trading, its activities were therefore taken to be centred around a particular market centre. But Mwirake is a group that is indigenous to the area and like Sikuvale it operates from a farming community. Their major differences are in membership composition and in the type of activities undertaken by each.

## CHAPTER II

### Methodology

In order to identify the socio-cultural and structural constraints facing the management of women groups both primary and secondary data were gathered. Most of the secondary data came from secondary source while an original investigation was undertaken as a primary source . Undertaking an original investigation posed two important problems: who was to be called upon to supply the information and how was this information to be elicited from those contacted. Since the two groups under study have a total membership of 74 women and given plenty of time, it seemed perfectly alright to conduct an indirect census. Two different meetings were arranged one for Mwirake (41 members) and the other for Sikuvale (33 members) during which it was anticipated that most (and if possible) all members would attend in order for questions to be put to them. The use of a random sample was abandoned because it would have been time consuming. It would have entailed the selection of a number of names from the entire group then a visit made to each of those selected. Or those selected would have been asked to assemble at a given spot for questioning but this would not have worked well because, word would have spread to the other members not selected and they would have wondered why they were left out. This would not have evoked proper rapport. In order to maintain a proper atmosphere, it became necessary to invite all members without exception and let those who



wish to come do so. This technique provided the required information because all the 41 members of Mwirake attended their meeting while 25 members from Sikuvale group attended their meeting.

In collecting the primary data an indirect approach as opposed to a direct one was taken. Observation could not be taken because it would have meant the observation of all the groups performing their actual activities which would have been time consuming. On the other hand an informal interview merely required members of the groups to be questioned although their responses contained many subjective elements. The formal interview would have had an advantage over the informal in that the study would have had objective facts, but there was a question of the time limit. Using the informal interview, there was one problem in that some respondents were unable to answer the questions either because of lack of proper knowledge of the issues involved and as such had no proper information clearly in mind. Some of them were unwilling to supply correct information because of fear and suspicion as they viewed the study as some sort of spying on them. Nonetheless, skill and care in interrogation were employed in order to reduce the error and bias introduced by subjective factors.

The data were to be obtained through informal interviews therefore the important point was the way in which the questions were to be asked. A printed questionnaire to be administered to the respondents for them to fill out was ruled out due to the fact that the majority could not read or write. So informal interviews were conducted during the two meetings of the two groups and information regarding the origins, purpose, activities, organisational structure, membership and source of funding, recorded. This interview technique was found most suitable as it permitted the control of the selection of respondents and made the time of collection of the data definite. Under this procedure women did not refuse to answer the questions, whereas their having to fill and return a questionnaire would have been in doubt. Talking to a group as a whole it was possible to ask more questions and as such gathered more data than would have been possible with questionnaires. In addition, it was possible on the spot to evaluate replies for accuracy or bias, elicit information that would otherwise not be forthcoming and as such obtained valuable information that would probably not have been included in the original schedule of questions.

Proper procedure in questioning had to be employed in order to obtain the desired information sometimes by rephrasing or explaining questions that the respondents

do not clearly understand. A question would be directed at the entire group and anyone of them could give an answer. This worked so on the socio-cultural issues, but on the structural issues, most members left it to the chairlady or the secretary to respond. At some stages of the interview, the specific-information type of questions were asked. For example, in order to establish the average age of the group membership the question "how old are you", was asked. In order to establish their marital status it was asked "are you married?" or "how many children have you?" But in other stages of the interview, open-questions were asked because specific information was not being sought. For example, "has your groups fulfilled the objectives you set out to achieve?" This type of questioning left the women free to give me any reply they chose. After a series of open questions, it was realized that difficulties may be faced in tabulation, because there was no restriction placed on the variety of answers of which the women (specially with Mwirake women group), were more than pleased to give. Open questions were bound to result into serious problems of classification after field work, therefore it became necessary to establish numerous classifications of answers and to define the boundaries of each. Sometimes it became difficult to decide in which category a given reply should be enumerated, so skill had to be employed to reduce the number of irrelevant answers.

The study would not have been complete without a sampled opinion from husbands of these women to find out how they feel about things. After all, they may pose the most socio-cultural constraints. Six husbands were interviewed, three married to Mwirake committee members and the other three married to Sikuvale committee members. The committee members are the chairlady, the secretary and the treasurer. The husbands of these committee members were selected because, they are most affected by their wives activities in the group. For example, committee members are more likely to go out for seminars and short courses and therefore be exposed to the world outside the home. They are more likely to entertain guests, therefore by virtue of their offices, they contribute more and therefore their husbands are likely to be affected more.

### CHAPTER III

#### Groups' Activities

In order to achieve its set goals, a woman's group requires proper management, which can only be realised in the absence of socio-cultural biases and the removal of structural constraints. If management is affected by these constraints, women group activities will never improve women's socio-economic positions instead they make them worse. These socio-cultural constraints as noted earlier, are those that came about because society expects women to behave in a certain way. Female subservience to male derives from cultural norms which women are unable or disinclined to change. In most cases the legal system in modern times follow in the footsteps of the traditional norms and as such women continue to be dependent. Property ownership especially the ownership of land continue to be registered under male members of the family with women having only usufructory rights over its use by virtue of their marriage. This is more pronounced in patrilineal societies whereby unmarried women and single girls have no usufructory rights. Therefore they are denied access to the use of the most important means of productions and yet the majority have no skills for wage employment. Because land is not registered in their names, they are not in position to secure credit facilities which often require the production of a land title deed as security.

As such women cannot improve their small holdings through credit facilities. As such opportunities for economic self-support are not readily available and as such female status in relation to male remains inferior. "Women and development" is a theme which Esther Boserup says currently "lies at the juncture of two major streams of present-day social research: women's condition and economic development (Boserup, 1977: xi).<sup>7</sup>

Social status of women is low where they are actively engaged in agriculture, handicrafts and petty trading especially when they have to support themselves and their children by such work, because they have no other support from male heads of households. Especially in subsistence agriculture, where they form the bulk of the labour force, a single change in this industry results in women misplaced. For example, the introduction of cash crops or modern farming techniques will not take into account female labour which in most cases is still traditional. As modern technology replaces traditional female labour in agriculture, they are not easily absorbed into modern industry due to lack of skills. In the end these misplaced women take on employment as domestic workers, petty traders and even prostitutes, mainly in the urban areas. For those who remain in the rural areas, they organize themselves into groups and do certain activities that can generate an income. These activities usually are

the same type of work (agriculture, handcrafts and petty trading) in which the social status of women is low. Women groups engage themselves in this type of activities because they are socially and culturally acceptable and traditional society will not shun them. The acceptability of group formation and its dynamics later on will depend on the type of activity that the group selects. Traditional female roles in agriculture make the hiring of land and the cultivation of crops (maize) more acceptable especially to heads of households. This maize is harvested and stored and then sold during times of shortage at a profit. This is opposed to an activity such as singing and dancing (entertainment) before a large audience on occasions such as Jamhuri Day or other national public holidays. Most husbands interviewed expressed no objection to their wives and daughters cultivating, doing handcrafts or keeping poultry, but they had strong reservations about performing especially when the group has to travel from Bunyala to Kakamega to perform before a sophisticated audience including high-ranking government officers. Therefore authority to become a member of a group will be granted if the group's activities are culturally acceptable. Most activities undertaken by women groups which number about 1,024 in Kakamega district (Annual report, 1986:10),<sup>8</sup> are those that are culturally defined such as agriculture and handcrafts.

As such this is not an overturning of tasks among the sexes but an intensification of existing ones. Division of labour is according to gender and age.

Mwirake women group is very dynamic. They started by hiring shambas and cultivating maize, beans and vegetables. This was done up to 1984. The maize would be stored after harvest to be sold during times of shortages especially to bicycle traders who come from the Mumias area. Due to the sugarcane production most of residence of the Mumias area have taken on planting the cash crop at the expense of food crops so they have to depend on food produced elsewhere. These bicycle traders provide good market for Mwirake group as they made substantial profits. The group later attempted sawing table-clothes but lacked market hence suspended. They bought zebus (native cows) which later on calved and were distributed among members. Members seemed very happy with this activity as they felt it had been a profitable one. They later on bought two sheep (Ewe and Ram) which at the time of this study had multiplied to six. As the group proved to be steady, they received a grant from UNICEF in the form of chicks through the Ministry of Culture and Social Services. Originally they received 80 chicks which matured and started laying eggs. This is the activity that makes them to be registered as poultry keepers. Some of the success story for Mwirake women's



group seems to have come to a halt sometimes in 1984 when the chickens grew too old to lay eggs. The original idea behind the UNICEF grant was to enable the group to become self-sufficient as time went on. But this vital point was not effectively communicated to the group, who distributed the old chickens among themselves and expected another grant from the government. At the time of this study, the group was still awaiting a promised grant from the Ministry of Agriculture vide its letter Ref.K/Stock/7/Vol.11 of 28th December 1984 signed by a District Agricultural Assistant on behalf of the District Agricultural Officer, Kakamega district. The letter promised among other things to look into ways and means of providing the group with the KSh. 50,000/- it had requested in the form of a loan to enable it to expand. A check on what could have happened revealed a second structural constraint as far as this UNICEF grant was concerned. The above letter was addressed to the District Social Development Officer by the Department of Agriculture whom the former officer had requested to carry out a follow-up survey on the viability of the UNICEF project. The recommendations given were never implemented and as months went by Mwirake women waited patiently in vain. Finally the UNICEF project ended in 1986, without Mwirake ever receiving another supply of chicks and without being aware that they were supposed to become self-sufficient from the first grant. They had built the

poultry farm themselves at the home of their treasurer. The structure stands empty today.

But this did not end their hopes as the group continued to farm and expand their activities. The Ministry of Agriculture later on provided them with one bag of fertilizer (D.A.P.) for their activities on the hired shamba. More members kept joining and the name Mwirake begun to take its present meaning. Members used to refer to their meeting place as "ahakhulakaniranga" derived from "okhulakana" and thus "Mwirake" or the "meeting place." As membership reached its present 41 women, the merry-go-round activity was increased from Ksh.2 to Ksh. 5 and the group meets twice a week instead of twice a month. They have also a contribution of Kshs. 10/- per member per month for their bank account which they hope to use to purchase a posho mill in the future. They feel that they can do well with a posho mill because the staple diet being maize meal they will not lack business.

Mwirake women group which is situated approximately 30 kilometers from the district headquarters (Kakamega) seems on the average to have achieved their objective under the able leadership of a dynamic chairlady. Annual contributions by members has been as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Annual Contribution by each member</u>	<u>Amount</u>
1981	Ksh. 50.00	Ksh. 1950.00
1982	Ksh. 64.00	Ksh. 2500.00
1983	Ksh. 100.00	Ksh. 3900.00
1984	Ksh. 100.00	Ksh. 3900.00
1985	Ksh. 100.00	Ksh. 4100.00
1986	Ksh. 100.00	<u>Ksh. 4100.00</u>
	Total	<u>Ksh.19,550.00</u> =====

At the time of this study, plans were underway to have the above amount (some which had been distributed to members in the form of loans) transferred to their bank account at Kenya Commercial Bank. The society around appreciate what Mwirake women are doing and as such they encounter little or no opposition at all from heads of households. Also their cooperative work, if planned is well attended as most members try to show up, so that nobody complains of poor attendance. In as much as this group seems successful, it has not promoted its activities to a level whereby male authority is threatened. For example, they have not travelled outside Bunyala location as a group apart from the chairlady and the treasurer. The chairlady is married to a man who has primary school level of education so he understands when she has to attend

seminars and training courses in her capacity as the chairlady. Equally the treasurer is married to a primary school headmaster who is also in a position to understand.

It rests on the shoulders of the group's committee to steer the group to prosperity, therefore when these three are from an atmosphere where they face no opposition to what they are doing it helps alot. For example, in answer to the question, "has any member of your group been to a training course or attended a course on group activities?" the response was that the committee members have attended seminars usually organized by the Department of Social Services. The chairlady recalled attending a training programme which seemed to have been part of the Women's Group Programme in the Special Rural Development Programme, whose objective was to train leaders who would then go back to their groups and pass on the acquired knowledge to members (Pala, 1978: 74) 9.

In response to another question "do you feel that those who went to attend a seminar returned and shared with you what knowledge they had acquired?" 37 members of Mwirake said yes and only four were not sure. For a group whose membership is three quarters illiterate there is need for education and being made aware as lack of education and awareness seems to be a major set back. There is need

to have these women exposed to what other groups outside the division are doing. Groups for example, in Vihiga division (also of Kakamega district) are engaged in various activities which seem more successful in comparison, so that Lurambi division women groups would benefit quite a lot if trips were organized for them to be exposed to what others elsewhere are doing. For example, one women group in Vihiga division namely Chango Women Society is among other things running a nursery school, it has built a classroom for youths and adults where adult literacy classes are conducted. The group plans to train youths in commercial subjects and related activities. It has built a teachers house at Chango Harambee Secondary School, built its own bakery and intends to acquire typewriters and sewing machines, in order to train youths (Chango 1985:1)<sup>10</sup>

From the above it can be seen that groups elsewhere have diversified their activities, so a brief visit to them would assist Lurambi division groups in actually selecting the right activities, Most of the groups fail because they select the wrong activities which later on pose marketing problems. There is no diversification of activities so that so many groups in the same locality end up doing the same thing, say handcrafts and therefore flood the market. Lack of market for their products is an example of a structural constraint. From the following list of group

activities, it can be seen how there is lack of diversification as groups undertake similar activities. There are 23 registered groups in Bunyala Location and a similar number in both South and North Butso.

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+ Activities of Women groups in Bunyala Location

Name of group	Membership	Activity	Does it have a bank account	Assistance from donors
1. Nambacha	40	Farming and Hand-crafts	yes	5,000/-
*2. Sikuvale	33	Farming and Hand-crafts	Yes	7,000/-
3. Khalekwa	26	Farming	No	None
4. Mukhula	21	Handcrafts	No	None
5. Lusumu	21	Handcrafts	No	None
6. Nawesakulira	21	Handcrafts	Yes	None
7. Munungo	26	Handcrafts	Yes	2,975.60
8. Mugangu	20	Farming	No	None
9. Chendakalaha	30	Handcrafts	Yes	None
10. Buchangu	30	Handcrafts	No	None
11. Nahulu	25	Handcrafts	No	None
*12. Mwirake	41	Farming/Poultry/ Business	Yes	Chicks/UNICEF
13. Sihanikha	21	Handcrafts	Yes	None
14. Simuli	45	Handcrafts	Yes	None
15. Nderema	40	Handcrafts	Yes	None
16. Mukhuyu	30	Handcrafts	Yes	None
17. Musaga	50	Handcrafts	No	None
18. Lwakhupa	27	Sewing & knitting	Yes	None
19. Sirigoi	21	Handcrafts	No	None
20. Mukama	21	Sewing & Knitting	No	None
21. Lutaso	50	Handcrafts	Yes	None
22. Mavanga	35	Farming	Yes	None
23. Weremba	40	Handcrafts	Yes	None

\* Source: Ministry of Culture and Social Services records, Office of the District Social Development Officer, Kakamega.

From the above, it can be seen that most groups are doing handcrafts, and for those who do sewing and knitting also end up by not having a market, in an area with relatively warm weather there is no immediate demand for sweaters. Most schools do not require a sweater as part of the uniform, so in the event of scarce resources, the family would rather spend on some other thing than purchasing any knitted items. The identification of the rightful activity that can utilize locally available material and manpower is one sure way in which these groups can succeed. This is why it is important for government extension services to reach this group for the purpose of offering proper advice. In every location, there is a Locational Woman Leader (hereafter referred to as LWL), who is an employee of the County Council. Part of her duty is to visit these women groups and offer advice, but the one in Bunyala seemed unaware of the dangers of having groups do mainly handcrafts and turn around complain of lack of markets. When this was pointed out to her, she felt that it is the women themselves who choose the activities and therefore she had no intention of correcting them. However, Mwirake women group seems to have benefited from her presence mainly because she is Amulandaa by clan, because when asked "who was the government officer that the group deals most with," the answer was LWL. On the other hand Mwirake seems to have had no dealings with the local Community Development Assistant. But Sikuvale



women group said the government officer most in touch with them was the Community Development Assistant. Most of them had never heard of the LWL

+ Activities of Women groups in both South and North Butso

Name of group	Membership	Activity	Does it have a bank account	Assistance from donors
1. Ingotse	50	Handcrafts	Yes	None
2. Bahati	35	Handcrafts	Yes	None
3. Eshumeyia	21	Handcrafts	Yes	20,000/-
4. Elwanda	32	Handcrafts	Yes	None
5. Shikokwe	42	Handcrafts	Yes	None
6. Emulama	39	Handcrafts	Yes	None
7. Mumbo	20	Handcrafts	No	None
8. Namungoma	48	Handcrafts/Farming	Yes	None
9. Mungakha	30	Handcrafts	Yes	None
10. Ebutenje	35	Handcrafts	Yes	None
11. Salama	40	Handcrafts	Yes	None
12. Shisango	35	Handcrafts	Yes	None
13. Upendo	40	Handcrafts	Yes	None
14. Eshihongo Maji	35	Handcrafts/Farming	No	None
15. Bushu Mati-oli	39	Farming	Yes	None
16. Elukhambi	70	Handcrafts	No	None
17. Econgong	40	Handcrafts	Yes	None
18. Emulundu	65	Handcrafts/Farming	Yes	None
19. Eshirembe	50	Handcrafts	Yes	None
20. Emahungu	40	Handcrafts	Yes	None
21. Emachembe	36	Handcrafts/Farming	Yes	None
22. Eshisiru	24	Handcrafts	Yes	10,000/-
23. Mwiya	30	Handcrafts	Yes	7,000/-

+ Source: Ministry of Culture and Social Services records, Office of the District Social Development Officer Kakamega.

Like groups in Bunyala, it can be observed from the above table that groups in Butso are engaged in similar activities and as such end up with lack of markets. Also it can be observed that some groups get generous grants from the Women's Bureau and yet others get nothing. For example, Esumeyia women group got Ksh.20,000/- and it seems that the Women's Bureau has no standardized method of allocating grant. There is plenty of disparity which is attributed to political pressure. The only requirement the Women's Bureau places before the group for eligibility to the grants is that, they must have a bank account and be recommended by the Local CDA and the area chief. Therefore, it is easy for Sikuvale women group to be recipient because the local CDA will merely be recommending a group headed by her mother. There is nothing wrong in all these as long as deserving groups benefit. The major problem arises when most of the members interviewed had never known that they got a grant and what it was meant for. Only the committee members who went to the District Social Development Officer in Kakamega to collect the cheque were aware of the grant. Asked for their bank account number, the chairlady made references to the local CDA who was supposed to be in position to know. The CDA, Bunyala location in turn declined to be interviewed terming this study as a political move that she did not want to be part off. She operates from the Chief's Centre

at Navakholo of which several visits were made attempting to have an appointment with her. Finally, she was located on Monday morning the 20th July 1987, but declined to be interviewed.

Besides the Women's Bureau, there are other NGO's who offer assistance to women groups in the division such as Partnership For Productivity which is a private non-profit voluntary agency with offices in Kakamega. They get involved with women groups because their focus is on income generating purposeful projects which happen to be the ones in which women groups also focus on. They seem, however, to have given most assistance to other groups in the division and to other divisions such as Vihiga and none to Mwirake and Sikuvale women groups. This and other donors are now required to channel their assistance through the Ministry of Culture and Social Services in order to reach the groups and not to go straight to the groups as before. As a matter of fact, groups which seek government assistance must put requests before the District Development Committee where it can be tackled by the District Women Development Sub-Committee composed of women only.

The same motivating factors (or some similar to them) which have lead women to organize group activities, still remain a barrier to their efforts to forge ahead, such as lack of proper recognition of their contribution to the

economy. Some deserving, hard working groups go unrecognised and as such unrewarded and yet some without much achievement are given grants.

A comparative picture of the age groups of both groups

YEARS	MWIRAKE	SIKUVALE	MWIRAKE	SIKUVALE
Below 20 yrs	-	-	-	-
21-25 yrs	2	1	Both "0" level	1 CPE level
26-35 yrs	11	9	5 non at all 6 some primary education	3 non at all 6 some primary level
36-45 yrs.	15	9	3 up to std 4 level 12 Non at all	9 some primary level
46-55 yrs.	13	6	2 trained in handcraft 11 no educa- tion	6 no education
56 and above	-	-	-	-
	41	25	41	25

These figures represent those who attended my interview and answered my questions.

Most of these women are those who are married into the area of group operation. The younger women born in the respective areas are not heavily represented for they have married out of the area. For some unknown reasons those newly married into the area of operation do not seem keen to join these groups. It can be assumed that reasons which led the older women to join, such as lack of financial support from husbands and lack of an income from any other source, have not yet affected the younger women. Most of these younger women are still receiving financial support from their husbands. Those whose husbands have left to work in towns, do not seem to face the type of poverty that the older women face, due to the fact that they receive remittance from their husbands. Some of the older women are widows and need money for school fees and therefore the need to join a woman group.

Sikuvale women group seems not to have had a clear-cut objective when forming their group and this could be why they have not been able to identify a viable activity. On 28-10-1986, they sold maize which had been donated by members and netted a cash profit of Ksh. 5,329/-. This was used to buy uniforms to be worn by members while entertaining. Most of the husbands lack awareness of the benefits that could be derived from a successful group if the activity is income generating. Most of them are not happy with the entertainment activity, so much that on

one occasion the group, accompanied by the CDA went to Kakamega for singing and dancing. Upon returning most husbands refused to accept them back without a proper explanation. Some women spent that night elsewhere while others were beaten up by their husbands and the situation remained tense till the CDA had to intervene and explain the purpose of the trip. This was the explanation given to me by the committee members for not having shared the Ksh. 7,000/- grant from the Women's Bureau. They maintained that most members will not invest the money wisely for fear of husbands. At times membership in the group becomes unstable due to the same negative reaction from husbands, as such, when cooperative work is planned, not all members show up and those who do get disolutioned. This seems to be the opposite of what takes place with Mwirake women group. By entertaining on social occasions, the woman's conduct is in question because of the nature of the activity. Entertainment is looked upon with disapproval since it is assumed by some men to be the kind of behaviour which is likely to be conducive to emotional attachments between men and women. These women as entertainers are on public display and their performance seen from the husbands point of view, capitalizes on their femininity. This activity carries the stigma of sexual promiscuity. Therefore, it all depends on the activity selected by the concerned group. They may face no biases if they select an activity

that is culturally acceptable. On the overall women enjoy group activities because of the social contacts that they bring. Being a member provides them with an opportunity to escape at least temporarily from the daily household routines, visit with other members, hear the latest gossip and generally feel that they are part of a larger community. Above all, they strive to earn a little money which will enable them to improve their living standards.

The fact that most groups do handcrafts and farming this is an intensification of gender roles as culturally defined and as such there has not been an overturning of relationship especially so in Lurambi division. Groups with activities similar to Chango Women's Society (such as the construction of a community hall and a teacher's house at Chango Harambee Secondary School), have succeeded in overturning gender relationships. They also do handcrafts but it is not their main activity as they have embarked on some which traditionally are the preserve of men.

Mwirake and Sikuvale women groups provide a striking example of two groups operating in one location where society and culture are monolithic and yet one is affected more with both cultural and structural constraints while Mwirake seems to be faced mainly with structural ones. For example, in answering the question, "do you need permission from your husband to be actively involved in your group activities?"



Most members of Mwirake indicated that they do not need - but it is because most of the members are clan affiliates and therefore arouse no suspicion on the part of their husbands. But in a group composed of members from various clans who may not necessarily be related, it becomes difficult for husbands to adjust. Those husbands interviewed saw no wrong in the group confining its operations on the local level, but voiced deep resentment in having their wives travel away from Sikuvale to say, Kakamega as traditional dancers on important occasions. They view this as an opportunity for their wives to develop extra-marital relationships with other men. Besides, to them a good wife does not give a performance in full view of male audience. Traditional dancing, away from the home village, even if the women are dressed in national costumes is culturally unacceptable for it exposes them to outside influence that can lead to marital instability. Therefore, it is quite acceptable to the husbands if the group is engaged in farming and handcrafts than when the performing arts are introduced. So it is not that permission from the head of household is lacking rather than approval of the type of activity that the group is to undertake.

#### CHAPTER IV

##### Strategies for the Reduction of Dependency

One of the big tasks facing most developing nations is how to intergrate women into the development process as equal partners with men (Papanek, 1977:14).<sup>11</sup> As such the issue of Women in Development has generated a lot of interest during the past decade starting from 1975 when delegates from the United Nations member nations met in Mexico to consider the intergration of women in development. They defined development as a process "to bring about sustained improvement in the well being of the individual and society and to bestow benefits on all," (Papanek 1977:14).<sup>12</sup> Therefore in order to achieve faster economic development there is great need to ensure full participation of half of the population - the women. Here in Kenya, women are able to form and operate income generating activities in an effort to achieve specific goals and improve their economic positions. They come together and consolidate so that they can articulate their problems giving each other moral support in times of grief, or crises especially members of a church group which come to give comfort. This has been necessary because our structural systems has not been recognizing women's contributions or their potential. Because plans for development may not yield the desired results if they are done in such a way as to exclude half of the population,

there have been efforts here in Kenya, to have women become active participants in the development process by not targeting them or using them as targets but by involving them in the process. Groups give the women movement social legitimacy. The organized element gives it legitimacy so that when they approach a funding agency they are easily assisted than a one women enterprise. Security approval is difficult for one woman than for a group. Groups give women a platform. The need to organize them has been necessitated by the impact of development on the roles and statuses of women as society moves away from traditional to modern technology. The impact has been historically brought about by colonialism, capital penetration on the money economy. Out of colonialism came economic dependency whereby the developing nations - Kenya included - became setillites of the colonial metropolis. Women as such have been heavily affected by this as men migrated to the urban centres in search of wage employment in order to fulfil certain colonial demands imposed on the male society, leaving the women behind as defacto heads of households, without decision making power. Dependency has persisted through neo-colonialism whereby the former colonial powers still control international markets and technology. Most of the internationally funded projects treat the receiptients as receivers without involving their opinion and a good example is the UNICEF grant to Mwirake women group.

But the women know their problems and work on a strategy from this knowledge. In forming groups, they run into many technical problems and at times politicians come in and try to use these groups. Since they need political backing some of their activities may be very politicized. In some groups members are the rural elites who actually manipulate and use peasant women to collect money. Sikuvale women group is a good example of this, whereby the local CDA and her mother as the chairlady become the sole beneficiaries of the grant from the Women's Bureau. The needs of an elite rural women and peasant women are not the same. The peasant women are not the same. The peasant women needs are more basic, but elite women exploit peasant women and are not sensitive to their needs. In the case of Sikuvale women group, it turns out that the CDA owns and operates two matatus that ply between Bunyala and Kakamega, called Khakasa I and Khakasa II.

Likewise the urban and landed elites in developing nations have turned the rural areas into setillites of the urban centres (metropolis) by skewing national plans towards investments in cash crops, heavy industry and urban growth - and on a smaller scale these rural elites (the CDA and the chairlady) can operate a group for entertainment in the urban centres - when Sikuvale women group travels to Kakamega to entertain. Therefore, women in developing

nations are affected by a structure which is part of the dependency system. They are caught up in a global situation which is not of their making and as such can do little if anything to change it. Women face a barrage of structural constraints as they are not denied an opportunity to produce goods for exchange in the international market but they are not well compensated for this production. Their options remain severely restricted by the economic position of the whole community which is ultimately determined by the global system. This is what is seen as industrial capitalism placing women on the periphery of the economy and the capitalism of the dependent nations making their position even more difficult, by as we have seen, investing in cash crops, heavy industry and urban growth. Therefore capitalism in these nations - Kenya included - is dislodging workers from agriculture faster than they are being absorbed into the formal sector. Women who form the majority of the labour force in agriculture are severely affected as they are dislodged and yet stand the least chance to be absorbed in the formal sector. The introduction of cash crops replaces, subsistence agriculture the main pre-occupation of women as has been the case in the sugarcane belt of Kakamega district. The introduction of modern technology has the same effect as women possess no skills in modern farming and are discriminated against in other spheres of the economy.

The fact that due to the colonial legacy which intensified gender role differentiation by denying girls the same opportunity as boys at school attendance, later on in life women cannot fully be absorbed in industry due to the lack of training. Therefore as women are pushed out of subsistence agriculture through the introduction of technological change, there not only occur a radical shift in sex roles in agriculture but these women are not easily absorbed in the formal sector and as a result there occurs the growth of a large informal sector, such as street hawkers and petty traders on rural markets, domestic servants or ayas and prostitutes. Services rendered by this informal sector is usually not counted in the GNP. Therefore women are again caught up in a situation whereby the international market constraints internal economies of the participating countries, especially the developing Third World that each lower level of the system has less and less autonomy for decision making. Due to the fact that women's participation is at the lowest level- that of subsistence agriculture and the informal sector, they have the least autonomy. The position of women here in Kenya and in Lurambi division in particular, is to be considered at every level of analysis as an outcome of structural, conceptual and attitudinal process by which Third World societies have continued to respond to and resist the global economic domination. The

dependency theory has seen how women's contributions at domestic and working level are not recognized and compensated adequately . In view of the above,how can women overcome dependency?

By improving their economic opportunities through improved incomes in the field in which they dominate such as agriculture, handcrafts and trade. This is why hiring of land and cultivating maize for sale by groups such as Mwirake should be encouraged. Care must be taken not to displace women occupations through modernization and technical advanced methods without the option of having them easily absorbed in industry. The idea of women groups is one way in which women positions can be improved if the focus is on proper activities that can generate an income. This effort to achieve specific goals through income generating activities is a move which is seen as an effort to pre-empt government's efforts towards the intergration of women into the development process. Group activities are a rallying point on whose wish is to improve the needs of their members, for the needs that members identify are directly linked to their roles in society.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions and Recommendations.

Depending on the activity selected by a particular group, there can be resistance on the part of husbands to let their wives participate, but on the whole, there are no problems when all members of the household come to realize the benefits that can accrue as a result of membership in a women group. Due to poverty in the home, the women seek to improve their social and economic positions by joining groups and engaging in income generating activities that can assist them to become economically viable. It is unfortunate when their energy is directed towards activities that are not income generating but exploitive in nature for the benefit of the local elite or the politicians. The level of education attained by members plays a vital role for if most members have been to school, say up to primary school level, they are aware of most issues affecting them as far as the management of the group is concerned. They also become sensitive to having large families, so that they are able to plan their families, avoiding to have a large number of children who may become a burden in the event of disertion and economic constraints. Also if members have had primary school level education, they are able to select well their office bearers to whom the success of the group may lie. There will not be a tendency on the part of the rural elite women, to impose leadership.



The women's Bureau should have a standardized method of giving grants, in order to ensure fairness and to reward hard good work. Now as things stand, it is the politicians and senior civil servants who are influencing the granting of funds regardless of whether the concerned group deserves it or not. Their influence can be detected in the way grants have been awarded to groups headed by their relatives or situated in their home areas. There should be a follow up system to ensure that, grants are properly utilized and actually benefit the recipients. It is a good policy now that funding agencies must channel their assistance through the Ministry of Culture and Social Services and not to give it direct to the groups as before. This will go along way in ensuring that the funds actually do what they are meant for. Funds should be given in order to strengthen the group's activities which can improve alot if members are given a chance to be exposed to the activities of other women groups in their divisions, districts and even provinces, which are better established. This would give them a better idea of what activities are more viable in order to minimize the problem of marketing. Groups located in the same area, should avoid duplication of efforts and diversify their activities so that the market is not flooded with similar items produced by most groups. For example, if one group in the area is doing banana fibre handcrafts, then other groups should avoid this activity even

though there is plenty of raw material obtainable locally. Otherwise, soon there will be a problem of marketing as supply will exceed demand.

This was a study aimed at examining how and why socio-cultural constraints coupled with structural ones hinder proper management of women groups. It was found out that sometimes extension services do not reach the groups and when they happen to do, they are not effective. On many occasions the LWL who is supposed to work with and advise these groups is not effective as she herself is not properly supervised by the County Council team. There is even a question as to whom she is answerable? Is it to the Chief or the CDA? This is a post that calls for a mature lady if possible one who has attained "O" level standard of education, because she is going to work with all sorts of women. The Department of Social Services may find it difficult handling the affairs of the LWL as she is not an employee of the Ministry of Culture and Social Services but one from the County Council. There should be dedication to a purpose both from the LWL and the CDA in ensuring that group interests are well catered for without any bias. They should ensure that there is no misappropriation of funds by making a follow up on grants and indeed if proper extension services are offered groups, particularly those engaged in farming will be able to increase their

effectiveness and make themselves economically self-reliant. For example, had Mwirake women group been properly briefed by both the LWL and the CDA that the UNICEF grant should enable them to become self-reliant, I am sure their energies would have been channelled towards this direction. But they thought they would receive another supply of chicks in the future and made a point to wait for them as erroneously promised by one of the many officials who visited the group to view progress.

Lastly, there should be legal provision to cater for the interests of women groups. One of the existing Acts, namely, the Societies Act, the Companies Act the Cooperative Act and the Partnership Act, should be amended to ensure that women groups have a legal entity to guide them when necessary.

APPENDIX A.

QUESTIONNAIRE:

1. Name of Women group and address .....
2. Date of registration .....
3. District .....
4. Division.....
5. Location .....
6. Sub-Location..... Village .....
7. Officials:
  1. Chairlady .....
  2. Secretary.....
  3. Treasurer.....
8. Number of Men                      Women
9. Bank account                      Bankers .....
10. Has the group received any funds from a funding agency  

Yes	No
-----	----
11. If yes, name the agency
12. Administrative Officers:
  1. Community Development Assistant.....
  2. Locational Women Leader.....
  3. Chief .....
  4. District Officer .....
  5. District Social Development Officer.....

Specific - Information questions:

13. What is your name? .....
14. How old are you? .....
15. What women group do you belong to?.....
16. How many children have you?.....
17. Are you married? .....
18. Is your husband a member of this clan?.....
19. Is he employed and working away from home?.....
20. Does your husband have another wife?....,.....
21. If he does, is she also a member of your group?.....
22. Did you go to school? .....
23. If you did, what class did you finish?.....
24. Are you formally employed or are you a housewife?.....

(Open-ended Questions)

25. a) Kindly tell me how this group started and when? . . . .  
.....
- b) Who specifically started it?.....
26. What does it mean Mwirake/Sikuvale?.....  
.....
27. What are the activities that you undertake?.....
28. When you started this group, what were your objectives?  
.....
29. Did you find any problem in becoming a member?.....
30. Has your group fulfilled the objectives you set out  
to achieve?.....

31. a) Has any member of your group been to a training course or attended a course on group activities?  
.....
- b) If yes, who?.....
32. Do you feel that those who went to attend the seminar returned and shared their experiences with you?.....
33. You as a member do you feel you have benefited?.....
34. How were the present office bearers elected?.....
35. When does the group meet?.....
36. How dynamic do you feel your group is?.....
37. Where do you sell your products?.....
38. Tell me about the division of labour in the group?.....
39. Do you find it difficult to participate because your husband refuses you permission?.....
40. a) Who is the government officer that your group deals most with?.....
- b) Is he/she easily accessible?.....
41. What are your future plans?.....
42. Tell me some of the problems that you face in your group?.....

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